

State of Connecticut

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



PERMANENT COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

18-20 TRINITY STREET
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1628
(860) 240-8300
FAX: (860) 240-8314
Email: pcsw@cga.ct.gov
www.cga.ct.gov/PCSW

**Testimony of
Liza Andrews
Legislative Analyst
Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Education Committee
Tuesday, March 22, 2005**

In Support of:

**R.B. 1346, AAC Paraprofessionals, School Nurses and Pay Equity
R.B. 6949, AAC School Readiness**

Good afternoon Sen. Gaffey, Rep. Fleischmann and members of the Committee. My name is Liza Andrews and I am the Legislative Analyst for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. You have before you today two bills that address "career ladders" and pay equity for early childhood educators and paraprofessionals. R.B. 1346 will require the Department of Education to conduct a study regarding pay equity in the education profession and provides a "career ladder" for paraprofessionals, while R.B. 6949, among many other school readiness advances, extends the same "career ladder" idea to include early childhood educators in school readiness programs.

Women remain trapped in low wage professions such as education. While Connecticut has made great strides towards increasing the value of our educators through increased pay, there remain areas of the educational system that are under-valued and under-paid. In 2004, the median wage for a preschool teacher was \$22,528, for a teaching assistant or paraprofessional it was \$23,391, and for an elementary school teacher it was \$56,048¹. This shows the disparity

¹ *Connecticut Occupational Employment & Wages*, Connecticut, Department of Labor available at www.ct.dol.state.ct.us/lmi.

between types of educators. Also, when comparing salaries with those of a male dominated field, such as tree trimming and pruning, which requires perhaps similar levels of training as an early childhood educator or paraprofessional but far less responsibility, we again see disparity. In 2004, the median wage for a tree trimmer or pruner was \$33,810².

As we recognize that unequal pay among members of the education profession is related to degrees and certifications obtained, we must also recognize the barriers that exist for many people who seek these degrees and certifications, such as the cost of higher education. This is why the “career ladder” posed in both of these bills is so instrumental. There is often difficulty in finding certified teachers for our classrooms; however, there are hundreds of paraprofessionals already in our classrooms who have the skill and desire to become certified teachers. R.B 1346 will establish a program to prepare paraprofessionals who have been successful in the classroom for teaching careers. Scholarships will be provided to these paraprofessionals to assist with their education and efforts in becoming certified teachers in shortage subject areas. R.B. 6949 would provide the same scholarship opportunities to early childhood educators.

Early childhood educators and paraprofessionals remain under-valued despite being responsible for nurturing our children during their most formative years. By providing “career ladders” and ensuring pay equity, we can demonstrate just how valuable these women are. “Career ladder” programs have worked successfully in other states. They create a working “pipeline” of employees prepared for certain occupations, and they help low wage workers gain new skills and improve their earning capacities.

I urge your support of these bills. Thank you.

² Ibid.

